



08-21-00

A

Customer No. 20350 **08/17/00**  
 TOWNSEND and TOWNSEND and CREW LLP  
 Two Embarcadero Center, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
 San Francisco, California 94111-3834  
 (650) 326-2400

Attorney Docket No. 16869P-010600US

"Express Mail" Label No. EL381322488US

Date of Deposit: August 17, 2000

**ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS**  
**BOX PATENT APPLICATION**  
**Washington, D.C. 20231**

Assistant Commissioner for Patents  
 Washington, D.C. 20231



Sir:

Transmitted herewith for filing under 37 CFR 1.53(b) is the

- ☒ patent application of  
☐ continuation patent application of  
☐ divisional patent application of  
☐ continuation-in-part patent application of

Inventor(s)/Applicant Identifier: **Tatsuya Watanuki, Riichi Yasue, Kazuko Iwatsuki, and Ken Watanabe**

For: **Packet Transmitting and Receiving Method and Apparatus Therefor**

- ☒ This application claims priority from each of the following Application Nos./filing dates:  
Japanese Patent Application No. P11-237846, Filed August 25, 1999  
 the disclosure(s) of which is (are) incorporated by reference.  
☐ Please amend this application by adding the following before the first sentence: "This application is a ☐ continuation ☐ continuation-in-part of and claims the benefit of U.S. Application No. 60/\_\_\_\_\_, filed \_\_\_\_\_, the disclosure of which is incorporated by reference."

Enclosed are:

- ☒ 21 page(s) of specification  
☒ 12 page(s) of claims  
☒ 1 page of Abstract  
☒ 9 sheet(s) of ☐ formal ☒ informal drawing(s).  
☐ An assignment of the invention to Hitachi, Ltd.  
☐ A ☐ signed ☐ unsigned Declaration & Power of Attorney  
☐ A ☐ signed ☐ unsigned Declaration.  
☐ A Power of Attorney by Assignee with Certificate Under 37 CFR Section 3.73(b).  
☐ A verified statement to establish small entity status under 37 CFR 1.9 and 37 CFR 1.27 ☐ is enclosed ☐ was filed in the prior application and small entity status is still proper and desired.  
☒ A certified copy of a Japanese application.  
☒ Information Disclosure Statement under 37 CFR 1.97, Form PTO-1449, and four references.  
☐ A petition to extend time to respond in the parent application.  
☐ Notification of change of ☐ power of attorney ☐ correspondence address filed in prior application.

	(Col. 1)	(Col. 2)
FOR:	NO. FILED	NO. EXTRA
BASIC FEE		
TOTAL CLAIMS	55 - 20	= *35
INDEP. CLAIMS	15 - 3	= *12
<input type="checkbox"/> MULTIPLE DEPENDENT CLAIM PRESENTED		

\* If the difference in Col. 1 is less than 0, enter "0" in Col. 2.

SMALL ENTITY		OR	OTHER THAN SMALL ENTITY	
RATE	FEE		RATE	FEE
	\$345.00	OR		\$690.00
x \$9.00 =		OR	x \$18.00 =	\$630.00
x \$39.00 =		OR	x \$78.00 =	\$936.00
+ \$130.00 =		OR	+ \$260.00 =	
TOTAL		OR	TOTAL	\$2,256.00

Please charge Deposit Account No. 20-1430 as follows:

- ☒ Filing fee \$ 2,256.00  
☒ Any additional fees associated with this paper or during the pendency of this application.  
☐ The issue fee set in 37 CFR 1.18 at or before mailing of the Notice of Allowance, pursuant to 37 CFR 1.311(b)

- ☐ A check for \$\_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed.  
 2 extra copies of this sheet are enclosed.

Telephone:  
 (650) 326-2400

Facsimile:  
 (415) 576-0300

Respectfully submitted,  
 TOWNSEND and TOWNSEND and CREW LLP

Paul Durdik  
 Reg No.: 37,819  
 Attorneys for Applicant

# PATENT APPLICATION

## Packet and Transmitting and Receiving Method and Apparatus Therefor

Inventors: **Tatsuya Watanuki**  
Citizenship: Japan

**Riichi Yasue**  
Citizenship: Japan

**Kazuko Iwatsuki**  
Citizenship: Japan

**Ken Watanabe**  
Citizenship: Japan

Assignees: **Hitachi, Ltd.**  
6, Kanda Surugadai 4-chome  
Chiyoda-ku, Japan  
Incorporation: Japan

Entity: Large

5      **Packet Transmitting and Receiving Method and Apparatus Therefor**

CROSS-REFERENCES TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application claims priority from Japanese Patent Application  
Reference No. P11-237846, filed August 25, 1999.

10

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates generally to line aggregating techniques, and particularly to a packet transmitting and receiving techniques for providing improved communications availability.

15

In the field of information communications, conventional line aggregating techniques are used to connect between network apparatuses such as two LAN (Local Area Network) switches or the like, or between a terminal such as a server and a network apparatus. Such line aggregating techniques use a plurality of physical lines for the purpose of connecting between the network apparatuses or between the terminal and the  
20 network apparatus to improve availability.

20

One line aggregating technique, known as "link aggregation" is described in an IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers) 802.3ad draft publication, for example.

25

In an example link aggregation system, a plurality of LAN lines (e.g., Ethernet or the like) connect between two LAN switches. Packets transmitted from LAN switches to LAN lines respectively are load-distributed in accordance with an algorithm such as a round robin algorithm and transmitted onto their corresponding LAN lines different from one another.

30

Now consider where a failure or trouble such as a line break occurs in any of aggregated LAN lines. In this case, a LAN switch is changed over so that a packet to be originally transmitted to a LAN line in which the failure has occurred, is transmitted through the use of the remaining LAN lines without the transmission of the packet to the LAN line with the failure developed therein, thereby allowing communications to continue.

While certain perceived advantages exist, the availability of communication lines between the two LAN switches can be improved.

Thus, what is needed are techniques for improved availability of a network system constructed using network apparatuses or terminals.

5

## SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

According to the present invention, an information networking technique wherein, packets can be forwarded between entities on a network along a plurality of lines, each line carrying separate copies of information is provided. If a portion of one copy of the information is lost due to line failure, for example, other copies flowing along different lines can be used to reconstruct the lost information. In a representative embodiment, a plurality of LAN lines respectively connect between terminals and LAN-to-LAN forwarding devices or between two LAN-to-LAN forwarding devices. The terminals or the LAN-to-LAN forwarding devices are respectively provided with multiple line transmitting units for respectively transmitting the same packets to the plurality of LAN lines substantially contemporaneously. There are also provided multiple line receiving units for respectively selecting any of the same packets sent from the plurality of LAN lines and receiving it. Embodiments are especially effective for application to a network connecting devices, such as a router, a LAN switch or the like, or a terminal, such as a server, for example.

An object of the present invention is to effectively process packets even when lost packets occur. Another object of the present invention is to provide a line aggregating technique capable of implementing the aggregation of a plurality of physical lines for the purpose of improving availability.

In a representative embodiment according to the present invention, a device on the transmitting side substantially contemporaneously transmits packets having the same contents (hereinafter called same) to a plurality of physical lines. Upon such transmission, for example, packets to which identifier information unique to each packet is added, are prepared according to the number of a plurality of physical lines and then transmitted. The device on the receiving side selects one of the same packets sent from the plurality of physical lines and receives it. Thus, even when a failure or trouble such as a line break occurs in any of the plurality of physical lines and thereby the loss of some packets occurs, the packets transmitted through the failure-free physical lines are not lost.

004263.00700  
004263.00700

Accordingly, the packets transmitted from the device on the transmitting side can be more reliably relayed to the device on the receiving side.

Numerous benefits are achieved by way of the present invention over conventional techniques.

5                    In a specific embodiment according to the present invention, the same information is prepared in a plurality of packets, and the plurality of packets are transmitted to a plurality of physical lines. Thus, even when losses in packets occur, information within the packets can be effectively processed. It is also possible to implement the aggregation of a plurality of physical lines for improving availability.

10                   These and other benefits are described throughout the present specification. A further understanding of the nature and advantages of the invention herein may be realized by reference to the remaining portions of the specification and the attached drawings.

## 15                    BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 illustrates a function block diagram showing examples of configurations of LAN-to-LAN forwarding devices, terminals and a network according to a particular embodiment according to the present invention.

20                   Fig. 2 illustrates a function block diagram depicting an example of a configuration of a multiple line receiving unit employed in a particular embodiment according to the present invention.

Fig. 3 illustrates a conceptual diagram depicting an example of a configuration of a received packet information storage employed in a particular embodiment according to the present invention.

25                   Fig. 4 illustrates a flowchart of representative processing by a multiple line transmitting unit employed in a particular embodiment according to the present invention.

Fig. 5 illustrates a flowchart of representative processing by a line receiver employed in a particular embodiment according to the present invention.

30                   Fig. 6 illustrates a conceptual diagram showing an example of a configuration of a packet to which identifier information is added in a particular embodiment according to the present invention.

Fig. 7 illustrates a flowchart of representative processing by a multiple line transmitting unit employed in a particular embodiment according to the present invention.

Fig. 8 illustrates a flowchart of representative processing by a line receiver employed in a particular embodiment according to the present invention.

Fig. 9 illustrates a functional block diagram illustrating examples of configurations of LAN-to-LAN forwarding devices, terminals and a network according to a particular embodiment according to the present invention.

Fig. 10 illustrates a functional block diagram showing an example of a configuration of a multiple line receiving unit employed in a particular embodiment according to the present invention.

Fig. 11 illustrates a flowchart of representative processing by a line receiver employed in a particular embodiment according to the present invention.

Fig. 12 illustrates a flowchart of representative processing by a receiving line switching unit employed in a particular embodiment according to the present invention.

Fig. 13 illustrates a functional block diagram showing an example of a configuration of a multiple line receiving unit employed in a particular embodiment according to the present invention.

Fig. 14 illustrates a flowchart of representative processing by a line receiver employed in a particular embodiment according to the present invention.

Fig. 15 illustrates a flowchart of representative processing by a receiving line switching unit employed in a particular embodiment according to the present invention.

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE SPECIFIC EMBODIMENTS

The present invention relates to techniques for providing improved transmission and reception of information between devices or apparatuses. Embodiments can provide improved performance with respect to conventional line aggregating techniques, for example. In specific embodiments, the devices on the transmitting and receiving sides respectively can comprise line controllers that control a plurality of physical lines according to a first layer (physical layer) of an OSI reference model, for example.

Link aggregation systems perform switching to the remaining LAN line upon occurrence of a failure or trouble such as a line break, for example, to continue the communicating, thereby making it possible to improve its availability.

However, in conventional link aggregation systems, losses in packets occur during a period from the occurrence of the failure to the time of the switching.

Described specifically, two devices, each of which has implemented a link aggregation system, swap control messages with each other in order to monitor a failure or trouble such as the breaking of each LAN line. The time involved in the exchange of control messages is on the order of seconds, in a representative example. Accordingly, the time of the order of seconds would be spent up to the completion of switching upon the occurrence of a failure.

There is a possibility that this will lead to packet losses of the order of a few millions of packets as the maximum number in a representative example, when a gigabit Ethernet of IEEE802.3z is used as a LAN line, for example.

Since the time required to perform a switching process does not reach 0 (zero) even if the interval between control message replacing times is shortened, the packet losses cannot be prevented from occurring.

Thus, in conventional approaches to link aggregation systems, the possibility of an occurrence of a packet loss is relatively high. Consequently, the retransmission of packets under control of a higher level protocol, such as a TCP (Transport Control Protocol), for example, is carried out, which can further reduce the transfer efficiency of such systems.

Further, a significant technical problem arises in that when a UDP (User Datagram Protocol) is used as an upper protocol, there is also a possibility that even the retransmission of packets will not be carried out.

One technique for reducing the omission of data at the occurrence of a failure includes a current-system transmitting unit and a preliminary-system transmitting unit respectively, that output data in synch with each other. The respective outputted data are stored in their corresponding memories provided in association with the current-system transmission line and the preliminary-system transmission line. Errors in data transmitted from the current-system transmission line and the preliminary-system transmission line are monitored through the use of a BIP (Bit Interleaved Parity) type computation. Data in a data error-free system is selected in frame units from the memory corresponding to the system. Such techniques relate to time-division multiplexed systems and are especially concerned with a process at a data error. For a further description of such techniques, reference may be had to a Japanese Patent Laid-Open No. Hei 8-149114.

In another technique, signals are simultaneously outputted from the current-system transmitting side and the preliminary-system transmitting side. The phases of the respective systems can be compared on the receiving side to cancel the phase difference between their signals. However, such techniques provide for resolving a delay difference at the occurrence of a data error, but do not bear directly on problems associated with line breaks, and the like. For a further description of such techniques, reference may be had to a Japanese Patent Laid-Open No. Hei 6-334638.

Further, a technique of data line switching control can be used. According to this technique, data substantially similar to one transmitted from a current transmitting means is transmitted from a preliminary transmitting means with a predetermined delay time. Upon its transmission, a value counted for the purpose of detecting an error in data transfer is added to the data. On the receiving side, a current-system receiving unit and a preliminary-system receiving unit, respectively, detect errors individually. Systems can be selected according to their detection. However, such techniques relate to the errors in data and does not necessarily relate to line problems such as a line break, and the like. Further, such techniques make use of a delay time developed between the receptions of data by a currently-used line and a preliminary line. For a further description of such techniques, reference may be had to a Japanese Patent Laid-Open No. Hei 9-326783.

In a representative embodiment according to the present invention, packets can be prepared by adding identifier information unique to each packet. Copies of the same information can be sent by different physical lines in packets having corresponding identifiers. Then, the packets are substantially contemporaneously transmitted using the plurality of physical lines. When packets having the same identifier information added thereto are substantially contemporaneously sent from a plurality of physical lines, one is selected based on the identifier information and received. Then, the identifier information from the packet is stored in a corresponding packet information storage.

In a representative embodiment according to the present invention, the identifier information can be based upon, for example, sequential information, or FCS values of an Ethernet (Ethernet: trademark of Xerox corporation) frame, an IEEE802.3 frame, an IEEE802.5 Token Ring frame, an ANSI X3T9 FDDI frame, or a CRC value of an ANSI X3T9 Fiber Channel frame, for example. Other types of identifiers can be readily implemented by one of ordinary skill in the art without departing from the scope of the claimed invention.

0042612.084700



When packet losses are incurred from physical lines in which a failure, such as a line break, for example, has occurred, identifier information of the lost packets is also lost. However, the device on the receiving side can obtain the same identifier information as the lost identifier information from packets transmitted through failure-free physical lines. Accordingly, the device on the receiving side is capable of receiving the same information as was contained in the lost packets, based on the same identifier information.

An apparatus in a specific embodiment according to the present invention comprises a packet storage in which received packets may be stored, for each of the plurality of physical lines. A mode flag for storing either a primary or a secondary mode therein is provided for each packet storage in association with the packet storage. When the mode flag stores the primary mode therein, the packet storage receives packets sent from the physical lines. On the other hand, when the mode flag stores the secondary mode therein, the packet storage abandons the packets.

In a specific embodiment, an apparatus according to the present invention can be provided with a line switching unit. When a failure occurs in a physical line corresponding to a mode flag set to a primary mode, the line switching unit changes the mode flag to a secondary mode. Further, the line switching unit changes the mode flag set to the secondary mode to the primary mode. Furthermore, the line switching unit compares packets stored in the packet storage and communicated through physical lines, each corresponding to the changed mode flag with one another. As a result of mutual comparisons, the line switching unit delivers mutually inconsistent packets to its corresponding upper-level protocol processor as received packets.

Even if the failure occurs in the physical line corresponding to the mode flag set to the primary mode and the loss of each packet occurs due to the process for switching between the primary and secondary modes, the same information as that contained in the lost packets can be received through the physical lines that correspond to the mode flag changed from the secondary mode to the primary mode.

Embodiments of the present invention will hereinafter be described with reference to the accompanying drawings.

Fig. 1 illustrates a conceptual view showing an example of a configuration of an information network including LAN-to-LAN repeating or forwarding devices and terminals in a representative embodiment according to the present invention.

00780 2924960

The information network shown in Fig. 1 has a configuration wherein two terminals 20 (terminal A and terminal B), and two LAN-to-LAN forwarding devices 30 (LAN-to-LAN forwarding device A and LAN-to-LAN forwarding device B) are respectively connected to one another by LAN lines 10 (LAN line A, LAN line B, LAN line C, LAN line D, LAN line E and LAN line F) provided in a two by two configuration. The terminals 20 (terminal A and terminal B) and the LAN-to-LAN forwarding devices 30 are respectively provided with portions for connecting the LAN lines 10.

Each of the terminals 20 has a LAN line controller 21, a multiple line receiving unit 23, a multiple line transmitting unit 22, and an executive or supervisory processor 24. The LAN line controller 21 comprises hardware or the like which performs control of each of the LAN lines 10 in a first layer (physical layer) of an OSI reference model.

The multiple line transmitting unit 22 comprises hardware or software or the like which performs a process for substantially contemporaneously transmitting the same packet to a plurality of the LAN lines 10 according to a process such as that illustrated by the flowchart shown in Fig. 4 to be described later, in a second layer (data link layer) of the OSI reference model.

As shown in Fig. 2, the multiple line receiving unit 23 has two line receivers 26 (line receiver A and line receiver B) and a received packet information storage 27.

Each of the line receivers 26 comprises hardware or software or the like which performs a process for receiving or abandoning a packet sent from each LAN line 10 according to a process such as that illustrate by the flowchart shown in Fig. 5 to be described later, in the second layer (data link layer) of the OSI reference model.

The line receiver 26 is provided for each LAN line 10. Since connections are made by the two LAN lines 10 in the present embodiment, the two line receivers 26 are provided. However, when the number of the LAN lines 10 is two or more, the line receivers 26 are also placed two or more. The respective line receivers 26 are provided every LAN lines 10.

As shown in Fig. 3, the received packet information storage 27 stores identifier information 40 added to each received packet therein.

The received packet information storage 27 does not store the identifier information 40 therein at its initial stage.

The supervisory processor 24 comprises software or the like which performs a process higher than that in a third layer (network layer) of the OSI reference model.

Each of the LAN-to-LAN forwarding devices 30 has a LAN line controller 21, a multiple line receiving unit 23, a multiple line transmitting unit 22, and a relay or repeating processor 25.

The LAN line controller 21, the multiple line receiving unit 23 and the multiple line transmitting unit 22 are those substantially similar to the LAN line controller 21, the multiple line receiving unit 23 and the multiple line transmitting unit 22 included in each terminal 20 referred to above.

The repeating processor 25 comprises hardware or software or the like which performs a process for relaying a packet to another LAN line 10, in a layer higher than the second layer (data link layer) of the OSI reference model.

One example of the operation of the information network shown in Fig. 1 will be described below.

The operation of the multiple line transmitting unit 22 will first be explained using the flowchart shown in Fig. 4.

The multiple line transmitting unit 22 monitors the presence or absence of each packet to be transmitted (Step 101). When the packets to be transmitted exist, the multiple line transmitting unit 22 adds identifier information to the transmitted packets (Step 102). The multiple line transmitting unit 22 substantially contemporaneously transmits the transmitted packets to a plurality of LAN lines 10 (Step 103).

Information unique for each packet, such as sequential information is used as the identifier information.

An example of a configuration of the packet to which the identifier information is added, is shown in Fig. 6.

While Fig. 6 shows the example in which identifier information 40 is added to a packet 41, the present invention is not necessarily limited to the example. The identifier information 40 may be added to the internal part of the packet 41, e.g., a header or the like.

The operation of each line receiver 26 will next be explained using a flowchart shown in Fig. 5.

The line receiver 26 monitors the presence or absence of each received packet (Step 201).

When the received packet is found to exist as a result of its monitoring, the line receiver 26 confirms whether the identifier information added to the received packet  
 5 has already been stored in the received packet information storage 27 (Step 202).

When it is found from the result of confirmation that the identifier information has already been stored therein, the line receiver 26 abandons the received packet (Step 203).

On the other hand, when the result of confirmation indicates that the  
 10 identifier information is not found to be stored therein, the identifier information 40 added to the received packet is stored in the received packet information storage 27 (Step 204). Thereafter, the line receiver 26 deletes the identifier information 40 and delivers the received packet to the supervisory processor 24 or the repeating processor 25 (Step 205). In specific embodiments, step 204 and step 205 may be performed concurrently, or may  
 15 be performed in inverse order.

A description will be made below of a case in which in the information network shown in Fig. 1, the terminal A 20 transmits a packet to the terminal B 20.

At the terminal A 20, a request for the transmission of each packet is issued from the supervisory processor 24. In this case, the multiple line transmitting unit  
 20 22 adds the identifier information 40 (e.g., "10") to each of the packets to be transmitted (Step 102) and substantially contemporaneously transmits the packets to the two LAN lines 10 (LAN line A and LAN line B) (Step 103).

The LAN-to-LAN forwarding device A 30 performs a packet relaying or forwarding process. The multiple line receiving unit 23 receives the two same packets  
 25 sent from the two LAN lines 10.

The line receiver 26 confirms whether the identifier information 40 (= "10") added to the packet is stored in the received packet information storage 27 (Step 202). When, for example, the line receiver A 26 executes the line receiver flow shown in Fig. 5 prior to the line receiver B 26, the identifier information 40 of the packet received  
 30 by the line receiver A 26 is not yet stored in the receiving packet information storage 27. Accordingly, the line receiver A 26 causes the receiving packet information storage 27 to store the identifier information 40 (= "10") therein (Step 204). The line receiver A 26

deletes the identifier information 40 from the received packet and delivers the so-processed packet to the repeating processor 25 (Step 205).

On the other hand, since the identifier information 40 (= “10”) is already stored in the received packet information storage 27 by the line receiver A 26, the line receiver B 26 abandons the received packet (Step 203).

As a result, the packet received by the line receiver A 26 is selected.

Further, the repeating processor 25 in the LAN-to-LAN forwarding device A 30 makes a request for transmission of a packet to the LAN-to-LAN forwarding device B 30.

The multiple line transmitting unit 22 newly adds identifier information 40 (e.g., “20”) to packets to be transmitted (Step 102) and transmits the same to the two LAN lines 10 (LAN line C and LAN line D) (Step 103).

Subsequently, a process similar to the above is carried out by the LAN-to-LAN forwarding device B 30 to relay the packet to the terminal B 20.

At the terminal B 20, the multiple line receiving unit 23 receives packets from the two LAN lines 10 (Step 201), and either one of the line receivers 26 delivers or passes the corresponding received packet to the supervisory processor 24 (Step 205). The other line receiver 26 abandons the corresponding received packet (Step 203).

The packets are respectively relayed from the terminal A 20 to the terminal B 20 in the above-described manner.

If a failure or trouble occurs in the LAN line A 10, then the packet transmitted from the terminal A 20 is not relayed by the LAN line A 10. However, the same information is sent in a packet sent from the terminal A 20 that is relayed to the LAN-to-LAN forwarding device A 30 through the use of the LAN line B 10.

Thus, the LAN-to-LAN forwarding device A 30 is capable of receiving the packet from the LAN line B 10 and relaying it to the LAN-to-LAN forwarding device B 30. As a result, the same packet can be relayed to the terminal B 20.

Even when a failure occurs in either of the LAN lines 10 (LAN line C and LAN line D) provided between the LAN-to-LAN forwarding device A 30 and the LAN-to-LAN forwarding device B 30 and the LAN lines 10 (LAN line E and LAN line F) provided between the LAN-to-LAN forwarding device B 30 and the terminal B 20, this processing is carried out in the same manner as described above. Thus, the packets transmitted from the terminal A 20 are assuredly relayed to the terminal B 20.

In the present embodiment, the respective apparatuses or devices are connected to one another by the two LAN lines 10. However, the present embodiment is not limited to this example. Accordingly, two or more LAN lines 10 may be connected. In general, the greater the number of lines, the higher the reliability.

In the present embodiment, the addition of the unique identifier information 40, such as the sequential information, to each packet on the transmitting side allows selection of the packet on the receiving side. However, when an IEEE802.3, an Ethernet, or the like, is used for the LAN lines 10, an FCS (Frame Check Sequence) is automatically added to each of the packets.

The FCS is substantially unique for each packet. Thus, it is also possible to select the received packets by using the FCS. In this embodiment, operations are shown by flowcharts illustrated by Figs. 7 and 8. Further, the FCS value is stored in the receiving packet information storage 27 in place of the identifier information 40. The respective parts will be described below.

As shown in Fig. 7, the multiple line transmitting unit 22 monitors the presence or absence of packets to be transmitted (Step 301). When it is found from the result of monitoring thereof that the packets to be transmitted exist, the multiple line transmitting unit 22 substantially contemporaneously transmits the same packets to a plurality of LAN lines 10 (Step 302).

As shown in Fig. 8, the line receiver 26 monitors the presence or absence of each received packet (Step 401). When the received packet is found to exist from the result of monitoring, the line receiver 26 confirms whether an FCS value of the received packet has already been stored in the received packet information storage 27 (Step 402). When it is found from the result of confirmation that the FCS value has already been stored therein, the line receiver 26 abandons the received packet (Step 403). On the other hand, when the FCS value is found not to be stored therein, the FCS value of each received packet is stored in the received packet information storage 27 (Step 404). Thereafter, the line receiver 26 delivers the received packet to the supervisory processor 24 or the repeating processor 25 (Step 405). In specific embodiments, (Step 404) and (Step 405) may be processed concurrently.

In such specific embodiments, the packets transmitted from the terminal A 20 are not lost even if a failure such as a line break occurs in any LAN line 10.

Accordingly, the packets transmitted from the terminal A 20 are reliably relayed to the terminal B 20.

A result similar to above is obtained when each LAN line 10 is a LAN having specifications other than IEEE802.3 and Ethernet, such as a IEEE802.5 Token Ring, an ANSI (American National Standard Institute) X3T9 FDDI (Fiber Distributed Data Interface), or a Fiber Channel. Further, the LAN lines 10 are not limited to lines used for the transfer of data between full duplex communication systems. The LAN lines 10 are alike even in the case of lines used for the transfer of data between semi-duplex communication systems.

Another embodiment will next be explained.

In another present embodiment, the likelihood of loss of a packet can be further reduced from occurring.

Fig. 9 shows a specific embodiment according to the present invention. Fig. 9 illustrates a conceptual view showing an example of a configuration of an information network having LAN-to-LAN forwarding devices 30 and terminals 20. In a manner similar to Fig. 1 described above, the information network shown in Fig. 9 has a configuration wherein two terminals 20 (terminal A and terminal B), and two LAN-to-LAN forwarding devices 30 (LAN-to-LAN forwarding device A and LAN-to-LAN forwarding device B) are respectively connected to one another by LAN lines 10 (LAN line A, LAN line B, LAN line C, LAN line D, LAN line E and LAN line F) provided in a two by two arrangement.

In the present embodiment, each of the terminals 20 has a LAN line controller 21, a multiple line receiving unit 23, a multiple line transmitting unit 22, an executive or supervisory processor 24, and a receiving line switching unit 50.

In the present embodiment, the multiple line receiving unit 23 illustrated in Fig. 10 further comprises a receiving line switching unit 50.

Other LAN line controller 21 and supervisory processor 24 are substantially similar to those already shown in Fig. 1. The multiple line transmitting unit 22 is substantially similar to one already shown in Fig. 7.

As shown in Fig. 10, the multiple line receiving unit 23 employed in the present embodiment comprises two line receivers 26 (line receiver A and line receiver B). Each of the line receivers 26 has a mode flag 60 and a received packet storage 61.

The line receiver 26 performs a process such as that illustrated by the flowchart shown in Fig. 11 to be described later in a second layer (data link layer) of an OSI reference model. The line receiver 26 comprises hardware or software or the like which performs a process for receiving or abandoning a packet sent from each LAN line

5 10.

The mode flag 60 stores therein information indicative of whether the line receiver 26 is "Primary" or "Secondary".

The received packet storage 61 stores each received packet therein.

At an initial stage, "Primary" is stored in the mode flag 60 of either one of

10 the two line receivers 26 as information, whereas "Secondary" is stored in the mode flag 60 of the other line receiver 26 as information.

In the present embodiment, "Primary" and "Secondary" will be defined as stored in the mode flag 60 in the line receiver A 26 and the mode flag 60 in the line receiver B 26 respectively.

15 The received packet storage 61 does not store the received packet therein at its initial stage.

Each of the LAN-to-LAN forwarding devices 30 has a LAN line controller 21, a multiple line receiving unit 23, a multiple line transmitting unit 22, a relay or repeating processor 25, and a receiving line switching unit 50.

20 The repeating processor 25 is substantially similar to one already shown in Fig. 1. The LAN line controller 21, the multiple line transmitting unit 22, the multiple line receiving unit 23 and the receiving line switching unit 50 are substantially similar to those included in the aforementioned terminal 20.

The operation of the present embodiment will be explained below.

25 The operation of each line receiver 26 will first be described using the flowchart shown in Fig. 11.

The line receiver 26 monitors the presence or absence of each received packet (Step 501).

30 When the received packet is found to exist from the result of monitoring, it is stored in the received packet storage 61 (Step 502).

The line receiver 26 confirms whether the mode flag 60 is "Primary" (Step 503).



When the mode flag 60 is found to be “Primary” from the result of confirmation, the line receiver 26 delivers the received packet to the supervisory processor 24 or the repeating processor 25 (Step 504).

On the other hand, when the mode flag 60 is found not to be “Primary”,  
 5 i.e., it is found to be “Secondary” from the result of confirmation, the line receiver 26 abandons the received packet (Step 505).

The operation of making the confirmation as to whether the mode flag 60 is “Primary”, may be carried out as a process prior to (Step 501) or a process between (Step 501) and (Step 502) in specific embodiments according to the present invention.

10 The operation of the receiving line switching unit 50 will next be described using a flowchart shown in Fig. 12.

The receiving line switching unit 50 monitors the presence or absence of a failure or trouble such as a line break on each LAN line 10 where the mode flag 60 is set to “Primary” (Step 601).

15 When the failure is found to have been detected from the result of monitoring, the mode flag 60 of the line receiver 26 is changed to “Secondary” and the mode flag 60 of the other line receiver 26 is changed to “Primary” (Step 602).

The line receiver 26 changed to “Primary” at this time delivers or passes a received packet to the supervisory processor 24 or the repeating processor 25 in place of  
 20 the other line receiver 26 changed to “Secondary”.

Further, the receiving line switching unit 50 compares each received packet stored in the received packet storage 61 lying within the line receiver 26 changed to “Secondary” and each received packet stored in the received packet storage 61 lying within the line receiver 26 changed to “Primary”. From the result of comparison, the  
 25 receiving line switching unit 50 delivers each inconsistent packet, i.e., each packet undelivered to the supervisory processor 24 or the repeating processor 25 during a period up to the change of the other line receiver 26 to “Primary”, to the supervisory processor 24 or the repeating processor 25 (Step 603).

A description will be made of an example case in which the terminal A 20  
 30 transmits packets to the terminal B 20 in the configuration of the information network shown in Fig. 9.

At the terminal A 20, a request for the transmission of each packet is issued from the supervisory processor 24. In this case, the multiple line transmitting unit

22 substantially contemporaneously transmits the packets to the two LAN lines 10 (LAN line A and LAN line B) in accordance with the flowchart shown in Fig. 7 (Step 302).

The multiple line receiving unit 23 in the LAN-to-LAN forwarding device A 30 receives the two same packets sent from the two LAN lines 10. The line receiver A 26, in which the mode flag 60 is “Primary”, delivers the received packet to the repeating processor 25 (Step 504), after the received packet has been stored in the received packet storage 61 (Step 502).

Meanwhile, the line receiver B 26, in which the mode flag 60 is “Secondary”, abandons the received packet (Step 505) after the received packet has been stored in the received packet storage 61 (Step 502).

Further, the repeating processor 25 in the LAN-to-LAN forwarding device A 30 makes a request for the transmission of each received packet to the LAN-to-LAN forwarding device B 30.

The multiple line transmitting unit 22 transmits the packets to the two LAN lines 10 (LAN line C and LAN line D) so that they are relayed to the LAN-to-LAN forwarding device B 30.

Subsequently, a process similar to the above is carried out by the LAN-to-LAN forwarding device B 30 and the packets are relayed to the terminal B 20.

At the terminal B 20, the line receiver 26 in the multiple line receiving unit 23, which is “Primary”, delivers each received packet to the supervisory processor 24 (Step 504). On the other hand, the line receiver 26 set as “Secondary” abandons the received packet (Step 505).

The packets are relayed from the terminal A 20 to the terminal B 20 in the above-described manner.

A description will next be made of a case in which a failure or trouble occurs in each LAN line 10. In the present embodiment, a description will be made of a case in which a failure such as a line break occurs in the LAN line A 10 lying between the terminal A 20 and the LAN-to-LAN forwarding device A 30.

In the LAN-to-LAN forwarding device A 30, the receiving line switching unit 50 detects the failure developed in the LAN line A 10 (Step 601). Approximately contemporaneously with the failure’s detection, the mode flag 60 of the line receiver A 26 is changed to “Secondary” and the mode flag 60 of the line receiver B 26 is changed to “Primary” (Step 602).

Subsequently, the line receiver B 26 receives a packet therein (Step 501) and is changed over so as to pass it to the repeating processor 25 (Step 504).

The receiving line switching unit 50 compares each received packet stored in the received packet storage 61 provided within the line receiver A 26 and each received  
 5 packet stored in the received packet storage 61 provided within the line receiver B 26. As a result of comparison, the receiving line switching unit 50 passes the inconsistent packets to the repeating processor 25 (Step 603).

Thus, the packets undelivered to the repeating processor 25 during a period from the occurrence of the failure to the switching between the line receivers 26 are  
 10 processed without any loss. As a result of such processing, the packets are reliably relayed to the terminal B 20.

If a failure now occurs in either of the LAN lines 10 (LAN line C and LAN line D) provided between the LAN-to-LAN forwarding device A 30 and the LAN-to-LAN forwarding device B 30 or either of the LAN lines 10 (LAN line E and LAN line  
 15 F) provided between the LAN-to-LAN forwarding device B 30 and the terminal B 20, this processing is carried out in the same manner as described above. In this case, the packets transmitted from the terminal A 20 are assuredly relayed to the terminal B 20 without any loss.

The received packet storage 61 may preferably be a FIFO (First In First  
 20 Out) type in terms of memory economy.

In the case of the line such as the Ethernet or the like, only identifier information such as an FCS value may be stored in each line receiver 26 to further economize on memory usage. In this case, the received packet storage 61 in the line receiver 26 set to "Primary" stores only the identifier information such as the FCS value  
 25 added to each received packet therein. On the other hand, the line receiver 26 set to "Secondary" stores each packet therein. In place of the FCS value, identification information such as sequential information is added to each packet on the transmitting side, and the identification information may be stored in the line receiver set to "Primary".

30 In a specific embodiment, (Step 602) and (Step 603) may be interposed in sequence in the flowchart of the receiving line switching unit 50. In this case, the receiving line switching unit 50 compares each received packet stored in the received packet storage 61 lying within the line receiver 26 in which the present mode flag is

“Primary” and each received packet stored in the received packet storage 61 lying within the line receiver 26 expected to be changed to “Primary” and being “Secondary” at present. As a result of this comparison, the receiving line switching unit 50 passes or delivers each inconsistent packet to the supervisory processor 24 or the repeating processor 25 as the received packet (Step 603). Afterwards, the receiving line switching unit 50 changes the mode flag 60 of the line receiver 26 being “Primary” at present to “Secondary” and changes the mode flag 60 of the other line receiver 26 to “Primary” (Step 602). Thus, there is no influence exerted on the sequence of reception of the packets undelivered to the supervisory processor 24 or the repeating processor 25 during a period up to the switching of the other line receiver 26 to “Primary”. The receiving line switching unit 50 is capable of delivering the packets to the supervisory processor 24 or the repeating processor 25 in compliance with the received sequence of packets.

In a yet further embodiment, step 602 and step 603 of the aforementioned receiving line switching unit 50, may be processed concurrently.

Each of the line receivers 26 employed in the present embodiment includes the received packet storage 61.

In this case, another hardware such as a memory, software or the like used for performing management as FIFO, and the like may be needed in specific embodiments. In another alternative embodiment, implementation may be simplified by omitting the received packet storage 61. An example for such a case will be described below.

Fig. 13 shows a yet further embodiment according to the present invention. According to the present embodiment, the implementation of hardware can be simplified as compared with other embodiments according to the present invention.

Fig. 13 illustrates a conceptual view showing another example of a configuration of a multiple line receiving unit 23. As shown in Fig. 13, the multiple line receiving unit 23 comprises two line receivers 26 (line receiver A and line receiver B). Each of the line receivers 26 comprises a mode flag 60.

The line receiver 26 performs a process such as that illustrated by the flowchart shown in Fig. 14, to be described later, in a second layer (data link layer) of an OSI reference model. The line receiver 26 comprises hardware or software or the like which performs a process for receiving or abandoning packets sent from a plurality of LAN lines 10 according to the above process.

The mode flag 60 is similar in function to that discussed herein above with respect to Fig. 10 and Fig. 11.

In the present embodiment, representative processing of a receiving line switching unit 50 is illustrated by a flowchart shown in Fig. 15.

5 In specific embodiments, configurations of terminals 20 and LAN-to-LAN forwarding devices 30 are similar to those discussed herein above with respect to Fig. 9.

An example of the operation of a present embodiment will be explained below. The operation of each line receiver 26 will first be explained using the flowchart shown in Fig. 14.

10 The line receiver 26 monitors the presence or absence of each received packet (Step 701).

When the received packet is found to exist from the result of monitoring, the line receiver 26 confirms whether the mode flag 60 is "Primary" (Step 702).

15 When the mode flag 60 is found to be "Primary" as a result of confirmation, the line receiver 26 delivers the received packet to an executive or supervisory processor 24 or a repeating processor 25 (Step 703).

On the other hand, when the mode flag 60 is found not be "Primary" as a result of confirmation, i.e., it is found to be "Secondary", the line receiver 26 abandons the received packet (Step 704).

20 The operation of the receiving line switching unit 50 will next be explained using the flowchart shown in Fig. 15.

The receiving line switching unit 50 monitors the presence or absence of a failure or trouble, such as a line break, on each LAN line 10 in which the mode flag 60 is "Primary" (Step 801).

25 When the failure is found to have been detected from the result of monitoring, the mode flag 60 of the line receiver 26 is changed to "Secondary" and the mode flag 60 of the other line receiver 26 is changed to "Primary" (Step 802).

30 The line receiver 26 changed to "Primary" at this time is switched over so as to deliver or pass a received packet to the supervisory processor 24 or repeating processor 25 in place of the line receiver 26 changed to "Secondary".

Although packet loss cannot be prevented in the present embodiment, the implementation of hardware can be simplified as compared with other embodiments discussed herein above by eliminating the need for received packet storage 61.

Further, the shortening of the time from the detection of a failure to the switching between the line receivers 26 further reduces the probability that any particular packet will be lost.

According to the LAN-to-LAN forwarding device 30 or terminal 20  
5 employed in the present embodiment as described above, even if a failure such as a line break occurs in each LAN line 10, communications can be carried out continuously. It is thus possible to construct a network system improved in availability.

Since a packet loss incident to processing for switching to another LAN  
line 10 does not occur as compared with the link aggregation system, it is possible to  
10 implement packet transfer with substantially improved efficiency in representative embodiments according to the present invention.

While the present invention has been described above using representative  
embodiments, the present invention is not limited to these embodiments. Those of  
ordinary skill in the art will appreciate that various changes can be made to the specific  
15 embodiments described herein without departing from the scope and substance of the present invention.

For example, lines intended for line aggregation in the present invention  
are not limited only to the LAN lines illustrated in these embodiments, but rather  
applicable to various lines.

20 Further, the LAN-to-LAN forwarding devices illustrated in the present embodiments normally indicate LAN switches, bridges, and the like. It can be appreciated however, by those of ordinary skill in the art that the LAN-to-LAN forwarding devices can be similarly applied even to a network apparatus such as a router which connects between a LAN and a WAN (Wide Area Network).

25 In this case, a network system having high availability can be constructed between the router and the LAN-to-LAN forwarding device such as the LAN switch or the like or between the router and a server or the like.

Further, the specific embodiments according to the present invention have  
been shown using the LAN-to-LAN forwarding devices and terminals. For example, a  
30 line aggregating technique of the present invention may be applied to a semiconductor device such as LSI (Large Scale Integration) and placed on a network interface card or the like. If a network system is constructed of terminals, or the like, each equipped with

the network interface card in that case, those of ordinary skill in the art will appreciate that a similar benefit can be achieved.

5 In specific embodiments according to the present invention, it is possible to reduce or prevent packet loss as well as to aggregate lines allowing an improvement in availability.

In specific embodiments, a packet transfer of relatively high efficiency can be achieved since the retransmission of packets due to supervisory or executive processing, such as a TCP or the like, can be substantially reduced. Further, even when a UDP is used as an higher-level protocol, packet loss can be prevented or reduced.

10 Further, in specific embodiments, the use of techniques according to the present invention permit construction of a network system having a relatively high availability.

15 In specific embodiments according to the present invention, a relatively simple implementation can be achieved due to the simplification of mounting of hardware.

Further, in specific embodiments, packet loss can be reduced by shortening the time from the detection of a failure to the switching between line receivers. Accordingly, a network system of relatively high availability can be achieved.

20 According to the present invention, the same information is prepared in a plurality of packets, and the plurality of packets are transmitted to a plurality of physical lines. Thus, even when packet loss occurs, information can be effectively processed. It is also possible to aggregate a plurality of physical lines for relatively improved availability.

25 The preceding has been a description of the preferred embodiment of the invention. It will be appreciated that deviations and modifications can be made without departing from the scope of the invention, which is defined by the appended claims.

What is claimed is:

1                   1.       An apparatus for transmitting packets, said apparatus comprising:  
 2                   a line controller that controls packet flow over a plurality of physical lines;  
 3                   a line transmitting unit, connected by said plurality of physical lines, said  
 4 line transmitting unit operable to add an identifier information to packets, said identifier  
 5 information unique to each packet, and thereupon, said line transmitting unit prepares a  
 6 plurality of copies for each of said packets in accordance with the number of said  
 7 plurality of physical lines connected to said line transmitting unit, and wherein  
 8                   said line transmitting unit transmits said plurality of copies for each of said  
 9 packets, one copy over each of said plurality of physical lines, and wherein each of said  
 10 plurality of copies for each of said plurality of packets comprises said identical identifier  
 11 information; and wherein at least two copies of each packet are sent to a destination over  
 12 at least two of said plurality of physical lines.

1                   2.       The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said line controller controls said  
 2 plurality of physical lines in accordance with a first layer (physical layer) of an OSI  
 3 reference model.

1                   3.       The transmitting apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a  
 2 protocol processor that processes said packets in accordance with at least a third layer of  
 3 an OSI reference model, and  
 4                   wherein responsive to instructions from said protocol processor, said line  
 5 transmitting unit prepares packets to which identifier information unique to each of said  
 6 packets is added.

1                   4.       A packet transmitting method, comprising:  
 2                   adding to each packet a unique identifier information;  
 3                   preparing a plurality of copies for each of said packets, each copy having  
 4 identical content, said plurality of copies prepared in accordance with a plurality of  
 5 physical lines; and  
 6                   transmitting said plurality of copies, one to each of said plurality of  
 7 physical lines.

1                   5.       The packet transmitting method of claim 4, further comprising:

09642612.081700



2 controlling said plurality of physical lines in accordance with a first layer  
3 (physical layer) of an OSI reference model.

1 6. The packet transmitting method of claim 4, wherein said  
2 transmitting said plurality of copies further comprises:  
3 substantially contemporaneously transmitting said plurality of copies of  
4 said plurality of packets to said plurality of physical lines in accordance with a second  
5 layer (data link layer) of an OSI reference model.

1 7. The packet transmitting method of claim 4, wherein said  
2 transmitting said plurality of copies further comprises:  
3 instructing transmission of packets in accordance with at least a third layer  
4 (protocol layer) of an OSI reference model.

1 8. An apparatus for receiving packets, said apparatus comprising:  
2 a line controller that controls packet flow over a plurality of physical lines;  
3 a packet information storage that stores identifier information unique to  
4 each packet, said identifier information appended to packets flowing over said plurality of  
5 physical lines; and  
6 a line receiver unit, connected by said plurality of physical lines, said line  
7 receiving unit operable to monitor packets received from said plurality of physical lines,  
8 and confirm whether identifier information of said packets has been stored in said packet  
9 information storage, and when said identifier information of said received packets has not  
10 been stored therein, causes said identifier information of said received packets to be  
11 stored in said packet information storage.

1 9. The receiving apparatus of claim 8, wherein said line controller  
2 controls said plurality of physical lines in accordance with a first layer (physical layer) of  
3 an OSI reference model.

1 10. The receiving apparatus of claim 8, wherein  
2 when said identifier information of said received packets has not been  
3 stored, said line receiver stores said identifier information of said received packets in said  
4 packet information storage; and thereupon forwards said received packets; and deletes  
5 said identifier information.

1                    15.     The apparatus of claim 14, wherein said line controller controls  
2     said plurality of physical lines in a first layer (physical layer) of an OSI reference model.

1                    17.     The apparatus of claim 16, wherein:  
2                    said protocol processor performs a protocol process in a third layer or  
3                    higher of an OSI reference model.

1                    19.        The receiving apparatus of claim 14, further comprising:  
2                    a receiving line switching unit that monitors a presence of a failure of one  
3 of said plurality of physical lines corresponding to one of said plurality of mode flags  
4 storing a primary mode therein, and when a failure is detected, changes said one of said  
5 plurality of mode flags storing said primary mode therein to a secondary mode; and  
6 changes another of said plurality of mode flags storing said secondary mode therein to a  
7 primary mode; and thereupon  
8                    compares each received packet stored in said received packet storage area  
9 corresponding to said mode flag changed to said secondary mode and each received  
10 packet stored in said received packet storage area corresponding to said mode flag  
11 changed to said primary mode; and receives a received packet equivalent to each packet  
12 lost due to said failure.

1                    20.     The receiving apparatus of claim 14, further comprising:  
2                    a receiving line switching unit that monitors a presence of a failure of one  
3 of said plurality of physical lines corresponding to one of said plurality of mode flags  
4 storing a primary mode therein, and when a failure is detected, changes said one of said  
5 plurality of mode flags storing said primary mode therein to a secondary mode; and

6 changes another of said plurality of mode flags storing said secondary mode therein to a  
7 primary mode; and thereupon

8 compares each received packet stored in said received packet storage area  
9 corresponding to said mode flag changed to said secondary mode and each received  
10 packet stored in said received packet storage area corresponding to said mode flag  
11 changed to said primary mode.

1 21. A packet receiving method, comprising:  
2 confirming reception of packets from a plurality of physical lines;  
3 storing said received packets in a received packet storage area provided in  
4 association with each of said plurality of physical lines, respectively; and  
5 conditioned upon a mode flag associated with one of said plurality of  
6 physical lines storing a primary mode, delivering received packets to a protocol processor  
7 for effecting a protocol process.

1 22. The packet receiving method of claim 21, further comprising:  
2 monitoring a presence of received packets from said plurality of physical  
3 lines;  
4 when a received packet's presence is confirmed by said monitoring,  
5 storing said received packet in said received packet storage area; and  
6 when said mode flag associated with one of said plurality of physical lines  
7 stores a secondary mode therein, abandoning said received packet.

1 23. The packet receiving method of claim 21, further comprising:  
2 monitoring a presence of a failure of one of said plurality of physical lines  
3 corresponding to said mode flag storing said primary mode therein;  
4 when a failure is detected, changing said mode flag storing said primary  
5 mode therein to a secondary mode; and changing a mode flag storing said secondary  
6 mode therein to said primary mode;  
7 comparing each received packet stored in said received packet storage area  
8 corresponding to said mode flag changed to said secondary mode and each received  
9 packet stored in said received packet storage area corresponding to said mode flag  
10 changed to said primary mode; and



16 packet information storage to store said identifier information of said received packets  
17 therein.

1 27. The apparatus of claim 26, wherein said line controller controls  
2 said plurality of physical lines in a first layer (physical layer) of an OSI reference model.

1 28. A transmitting and receiving apparatus for exchanging packets,  
2 comprising:  
3 a line controller for controlling a plurality of physical lines;  
4 a line transmitting unit that prepares packets with identifier information  
5 unique each packet added thereto, in association with a quantity of said plurality of  
6 physical lines, and transmits packets having identical content to said plurality of physical  
7 lines;

8 mode flags associated with each of said plurality of physical lines, said  
9 mode flags operative to store either a primary or a secondary mode; and  
10 line receivers that deliver packets received from said plurality of physical  
11 lines to a protocol processor when said mode flags store a primary mode therein, said line  
12 receivers further operative to abandon received packets when said mode flags store a  
13 secondary mode therein.

1 29. The apparatus of claim 28, wherein said line controller controls  
2 said plurality of physical lines in a first layer (physical layer) of an OSI reference model.

1 30. The transmitting apparatus of claim 1, wherein said identifier  
2 information is an FCS (Frame Check Sequence) value of an Ethernet frame.

1 31. The transmitting apparatus of claim 1, wherein said identifier  
2 information comprises an FCS value of an IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronics  
3 Engineers) 802.3 frame.

1 32. The transmitting apparatus of claim 1, wherein said identifier  
2 information comprises an FCS value of an IEEE802.5 Token Ring frame.

1 33. The transmitting apparatus of claim 1, wherein said identifier  
2 information comprises an FCS value of an ANSI (American National Standard Institute)  
3 X3T9 FDDI (Fiber Distributed Data Interface) frame.

1                   34.    The transmitting apparatus of claim 1, wherein said identifier  
2 information comprises a CRC (Cyclic Redundancy Check) value of an ANSI X3T9 Fiber  
3 Channel frame.

1                   35.    The receiving apparatus of claim 8, wherein said identifier  
2 information comprises an FCS (Frame Check Sequence) value of an Ethernet frame.

1                   36.    The receiving apparatus of claim 8, wherein said identifier  
2 information comprises an FCS value of an IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronics  
3 Engineers) 802.3 frame.

1                   37.    The receiving apparatus of claim 8, wherein said identifier  
2 information comprises an FCS value of an IEEE802.5 Token Ring frame.

1                   38.    The receiving apparatus of claim 8, wherein said identifier  
2 information comprises an FCS value of an ANSI (American National Standard Institute)  
3 X3T9 FDDI (Fiber Distributed Data Interface) frame.

1                   39.    The receiving apparatus of claim 8, wherein said identifier  
2 information comprises a CRC (Cyclic Redundancy Check) value of an ANSI X3T9 Fiber  
3 Channel frame.

1                   40.    A transmitting apparatus for transmitting packets to another  
2 apparatus through a plurality of physical lines, comprising:  
3                   a line transmitting unit for preparing packets with identifier information  
4 added thereto unique to each packet, in association with the quantity of said plurality of  
5 physical lines, and transmitting said packets to said plurality of physical lines.

1                   41.    A receiving apparatus for receiving packets from another apparatus  
2 through a plurality of physical lines, comprising:  
3                   a packet information storage for storing therein identifier information  
4 unique to each packet, which is added to said received packets; and  
5                   at least one line receiver for monitoring the received packets and when the  
6 received packets are confirmed, confirming whether the identifier information of the  
7 received packets are stored in the packet information storage, and when the identifier

8 information having the same contents as those of the received packets are not stored  
9 therein, allowing said packet information storage to store the identifier information of the  
10 received packets therein.

1 42. A computer data signal embodied in a transmission medium  
2 comprising:  
3 code for adding to each packet a unique identifier information;  
4 code for preparing a plurality of copies for each of said packets, each copy  
5 having identical content, said plurality of copies prepared in accordance with a plurality  
6 of physical lines; and  
7 code for transmitting said plurality of copies, one to each of said plurality  
8 of physical lines.

1 43. The computer data signal of claim 42, further comprising:  
2 code for controlling said plurality of physical lines in accordance with a  
3 first layer (physical layer) of an OSI reference model.

1 44. The computer data signal of claim 42, wherein said code for  
2 transmitting said plurality of copies further comprises:  
3 code for substantially contemporaneously transmitting said plurality of  
4 copies of said plurality of packets to said plurality of physical lines in accordance with a  
5 second layer (data link layer) of an OSI reference model.

1 45. The computer data signal of claim 42, wherein said code for  
2 transmitting said plurality of copies further comprises:  
3 code for instructing transmission of packets in accordance with at least a  
4 third layer (protocol layer) of an OSI reference model.

1 46. A computer data signal embodied in a transmission medium  
2 comprising:  
3 code for confirming reception of packets from a plurality of physical lines;  
4 code for storing said received packets in a received packet storage area  
5 provided in association with each of said plurality of physical lines, respectively; and

007780" 2T24960



6 code for delivering received packets to a protocol processor for effecting a  
7 protocol process, conditioned upon a mode flag associated with one of said plurality of  
8 physical lines storing a primary mode.

1 47. The computer data signal of claim 46, further comprising:  
2 code for monitoring a presence of received packets from said plurality of  
3 physical lines; and  
4 code for storing said received packet in said received packet storage area,  
5 when a received packet's presence is confirmed by said monitoring, and abandoning said  
6 received packet, when said mode flag associated with one of said plurality of physical  
7 lines stores a secondary mode therein.

1 48. The computer data signal of claim 46, further comprising:  
2 code for monitoring a presence of a failure of one of said plurality of  
3 physical lines corresponding to said mode flag storing said primary mode therein;  
4 code for changing said mode flag storing said primary mode therein to a  
5 secondary mode; and changing a mode flag storing said secondary mode therein to said  
6 primary mode, when a failure is detected;  
7 code for comparing each received packet stored in said received packet  
8 storage area corresponding to said mode flag changed to said secondary mode and each  
9 received packet stored in said received packet storage area corresponding to said mode  
10 flag changed to said primary mode; and  
11 code for receiving for further processing a received packet equivalent to  
12 each packet lost due to said failure, said equivalence established by said code for  
13 comparing.

1 49. A computer program product for transmitting packets, said product  
2 comprising:  
3 code for adding to each packet a unique identifier information;  
4 code for preparing a plurality of copies for each of said packets, each copy  
5 having identical content, said plurality of copies prepared in accordance with a plurality  
6 of physical lines;  
7 code for transmitting said plurality of copies, one to each of said plurality  
8 of physical lines; and

9 a computer readable storage medium for holding the codes.

1 50. The computer program product of claim 49, further comprising:  
2 code for controlling said plurality of physical lines in accordance with a  
3 first layer (physical layer) of an OSI reference model.

1 51. The computer program product of claim 49, wherein said code for  
2 transmitting said plurality of copies further comprises:  
3 code for substantially contemporaneously transmitting said plurality of  
4 copies of said plurality of packets to said plurality of physical lines in accordance with a  
5 second layer (data link layer) of an OSI reference model.

1 52. The computer program product of claim 49, wherein said code for  
2 transmitting said plurality of copies further comprises:  
3 code for instructing transmission of packets in accordance with at least a  
4 third layer (protocol layer) of an OSI reference model.

1 53. A computer program product for receiving packets, said computer  
2 program product comprising:  
3 code for confirming reception of packets from a plurality of physical lines;  
4 code for storing said received packets in a received packet storage area  
5 provided in association with each of said plurality of physical lines, respectively; and  
6 code for delivering received packets to a protocol processor for effecting a  
7 protocol process, conditioned upon a mode flag associated with one of said plurality of  
8 physical lines storing a primary mode; and  
9 a computer readable storage medium for holding the codes.

1 54. The computer program product of claim 53, further comprising:  
2 code for monitoring a presence of received packets from said plurality of  
3 physical lines; and  
4 code for storing said received packet in said received packet storage area,  
5 when a received packet's presence is confirmed by said monitoring, and abandoning said  
6 received packet, when said mode flag associated with one of said plurality of physical  
7 lines stores a secondary mode therein.

1 55. The computer program product of claim 53, further comprising:

0076012109260

2                   code for monitoring a presence of a failure of one of said plurality of  
3 physical lines corresponding to said mode flag storing said primary mode therein;  
4                   code for changing said mode flag storing said primary mode therein to a  
5 secondary mode; and changing a mode flag storing said secondary mode therein to said  
6 primary mode, when a failure is detected;  
7                   code for comparing each received packet stored in said received packet  
8 storage area corresponding to said mode flag changed to said secondary mode and each  
9 received packet stored in said received packet storage area corresponding to said mode  
10 flag changed to said primary mode; and  
11                  code for receiving for further processing a received packet equivalent to  
12 each packet lost due to said failure, said equivalence established by said code for  
13 comparing.

004301034300

## Packet Transmitting and Receiving Method and Apparatus Therefor

### ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

According to the present invention, an information network wherein, packets can be forwarded between entities on a network along a plurality of lines, each line carrying separate copies of information. If a portion of one copy of the information is lost due to line failure, for example, other copies flowing along different lines can be used to reconstruct the lost information. In a representative embodiment, a plurality of LAN lines respectively connect between terminals and LAN-to-LAN forwarding devices or between two LAN-to-LAN forwarding devices. The terminals or the LAN-to-LAN forwarding devices are respectively provided with multiple line transmitting units for respectively transmitting the same packets to the plurality of LAN lines substantially contemporaneously. There are also provided multiple line receiving units for respectively selecting any of the same packets sent from the plurality of LAN lines and receiving it.

15

20

25

30

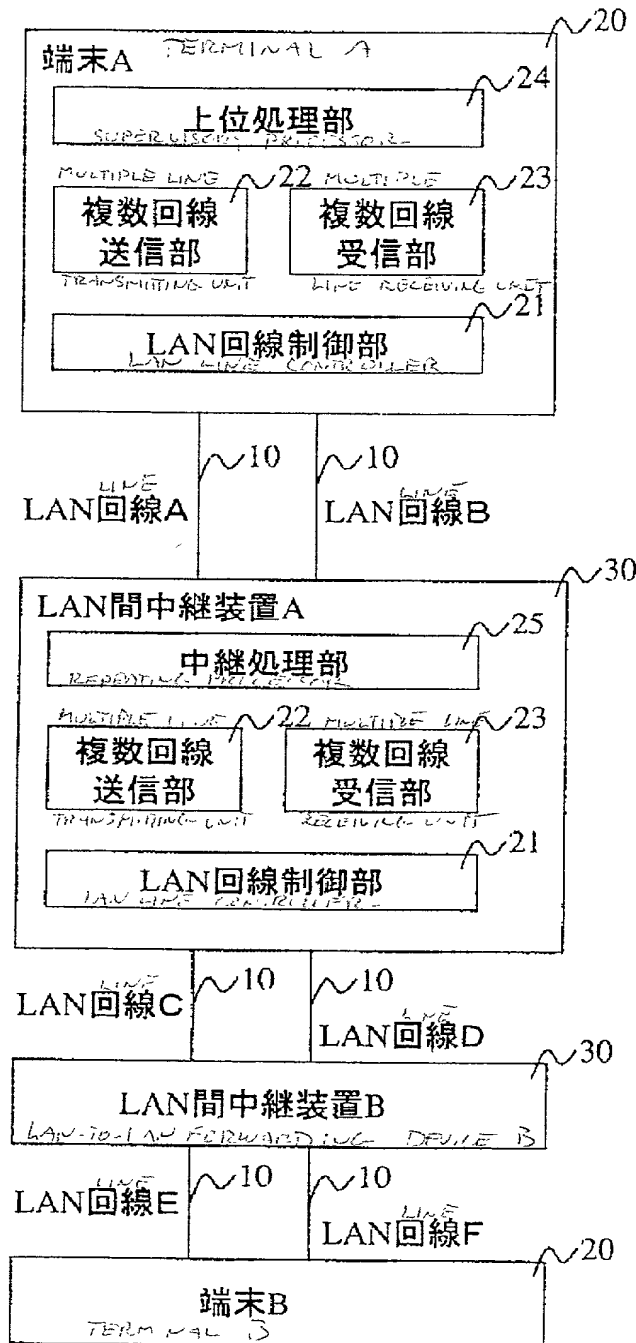
004293.037002T80"2T924360

ファイル名 = K99051371A1.el

【書類名】 図面

【図 1】

【図1 LAN間中継装置構成、端末構成、およびネットワーク構成例】

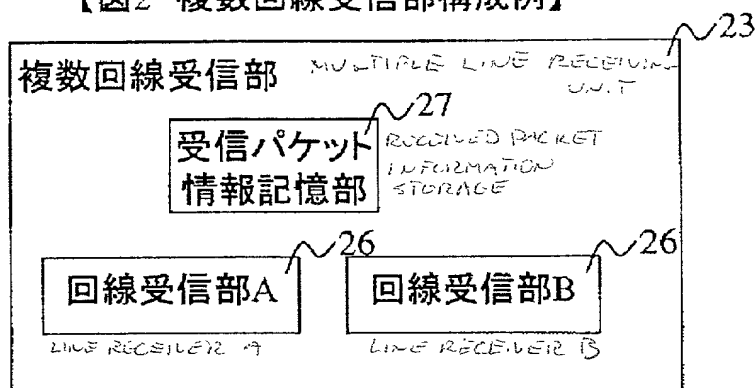


002780 2724560

ファイル名 = K99051371A1.el

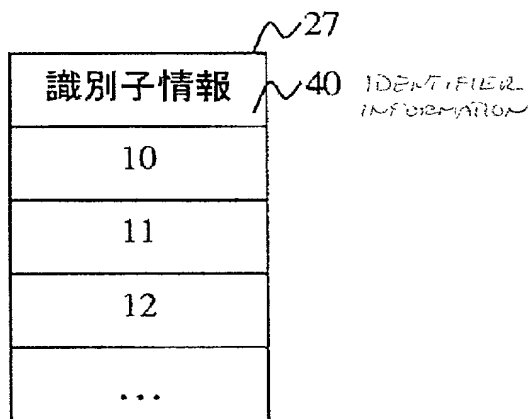
【図 2】

【図2 複数回線受信部構成例】



【図 3】

【図3 受信パケット情報記憶部構成例】

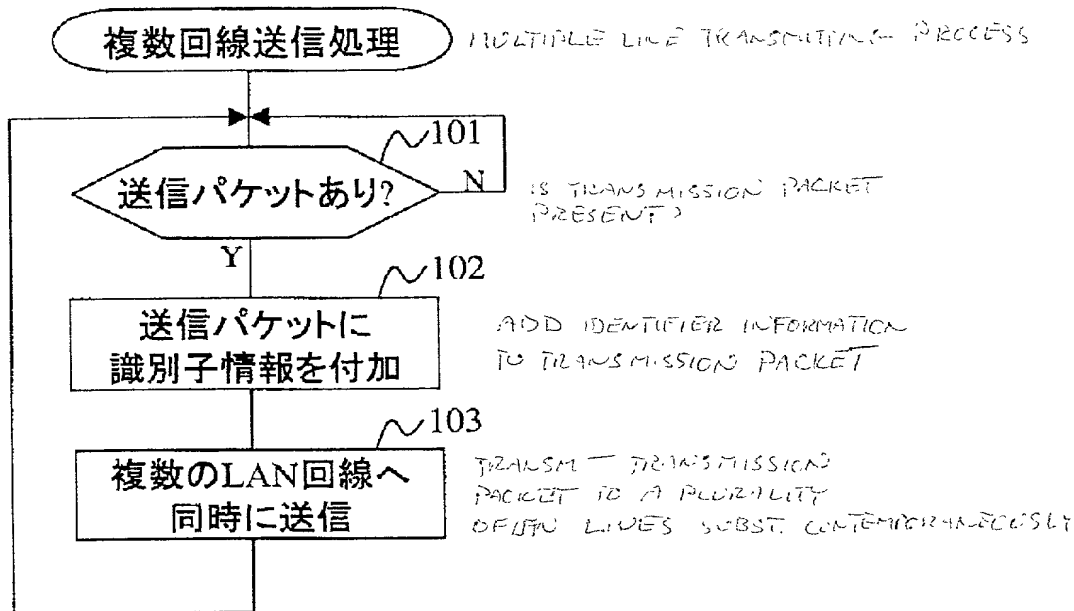


09642612.081700

ファイル名 = K99051371A1.e1

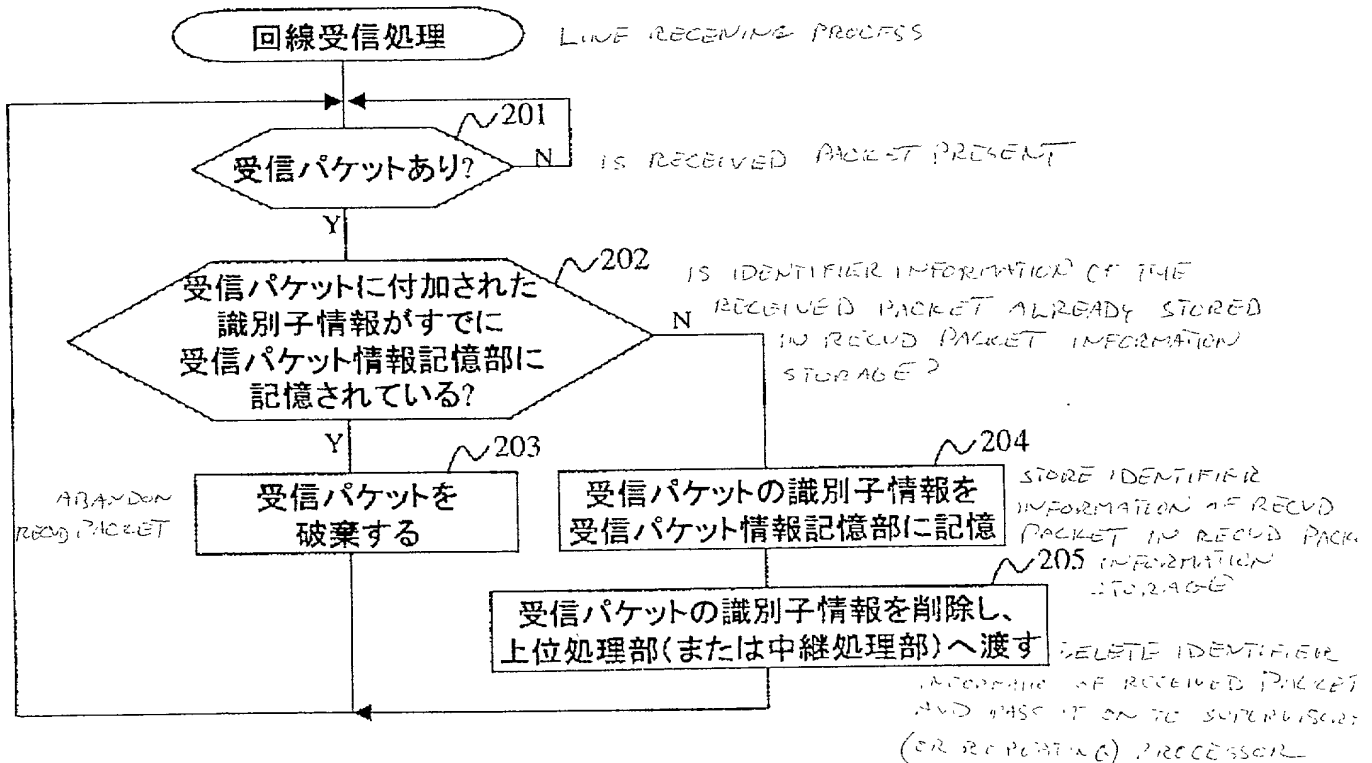
【図4】

【図4 複数回線送信部フロー】



【図5】

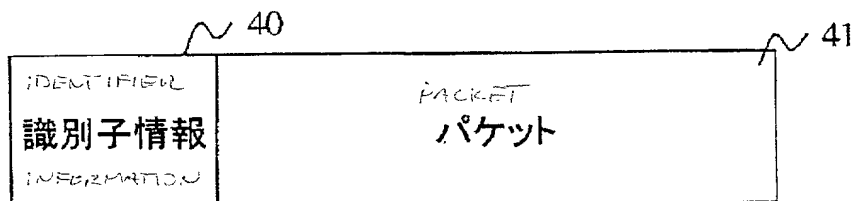
【図5 回線受信部フロー】



ファイル名 = K99051371A1.e1

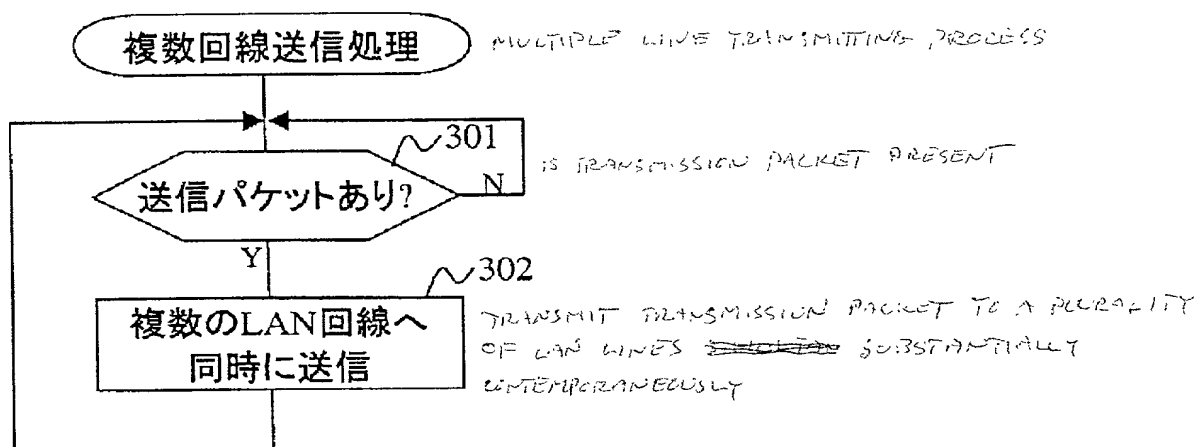
【図6】

【図6 識別子情報の付加したパケット構成例】



【図7】

【図7 複数回線送信部フロー】



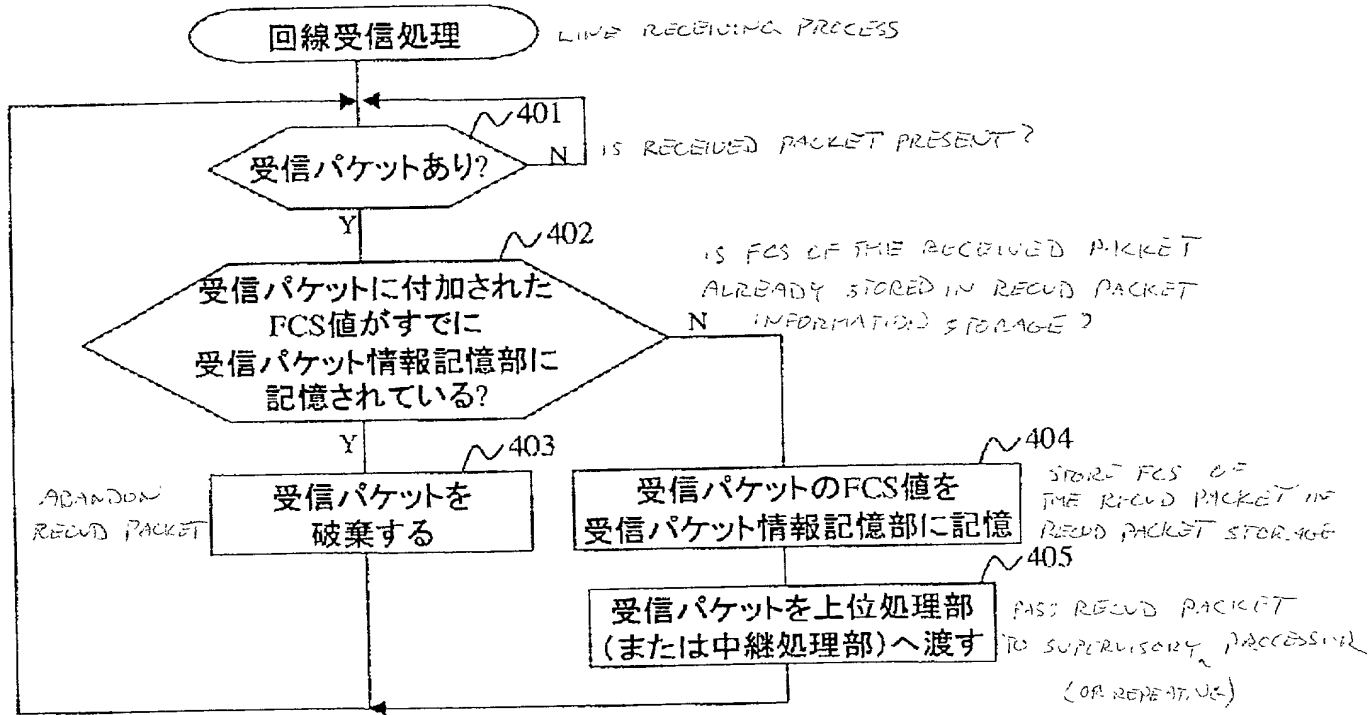
00780" 21924960



ファイル名 = K99051371A1.e1

【図 8】

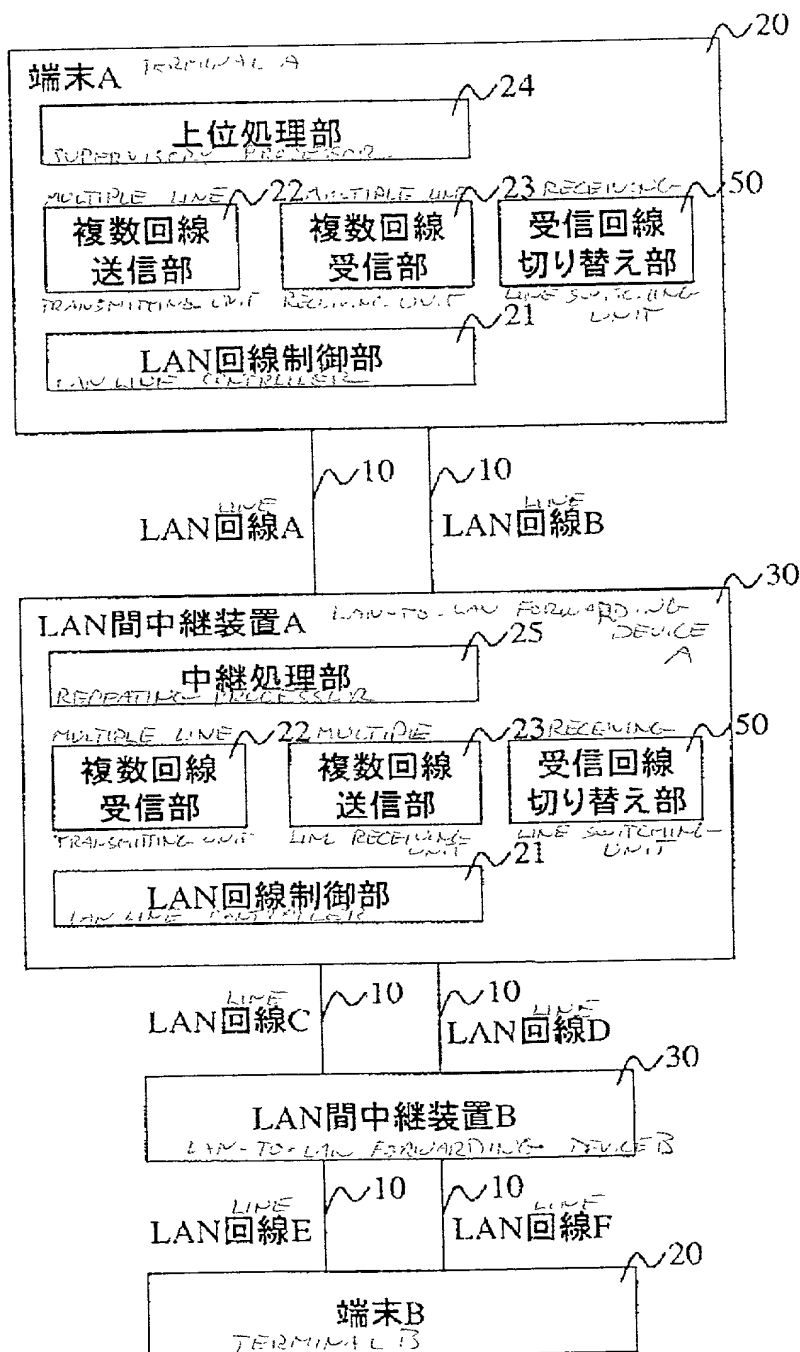
【図8 回線受信部フロー】



ファイル名 = K99051371A1.e1

【図9】

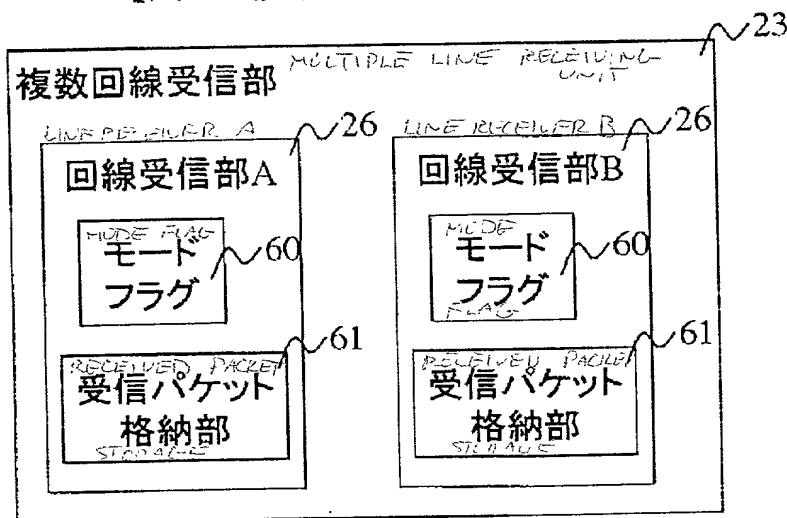
【図9 LAN間中継装置構成、端末構成、およびネットワーク構成例】



ファイル名 = K99051371A1.e1

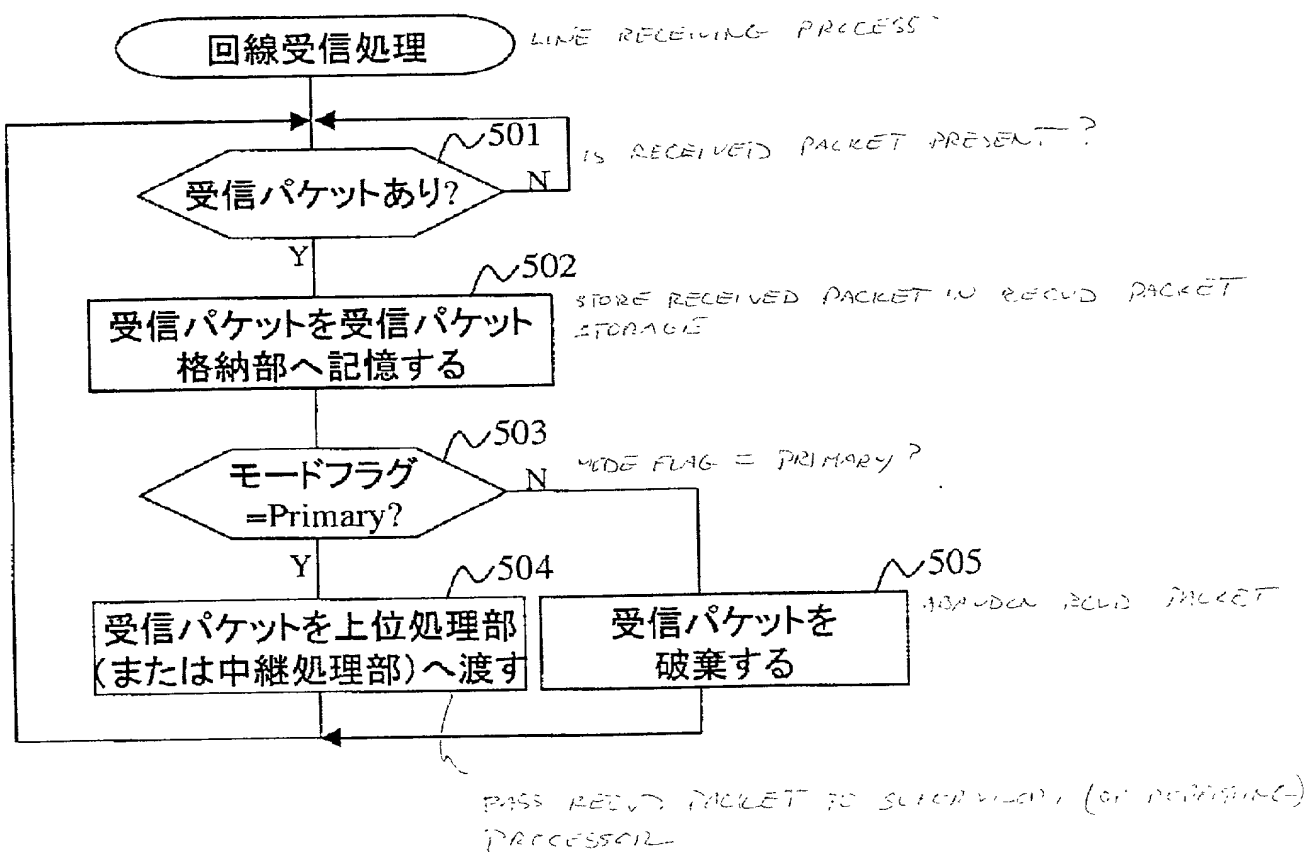
【図10】

【図10 複数回線受信部構成例】



【図11】

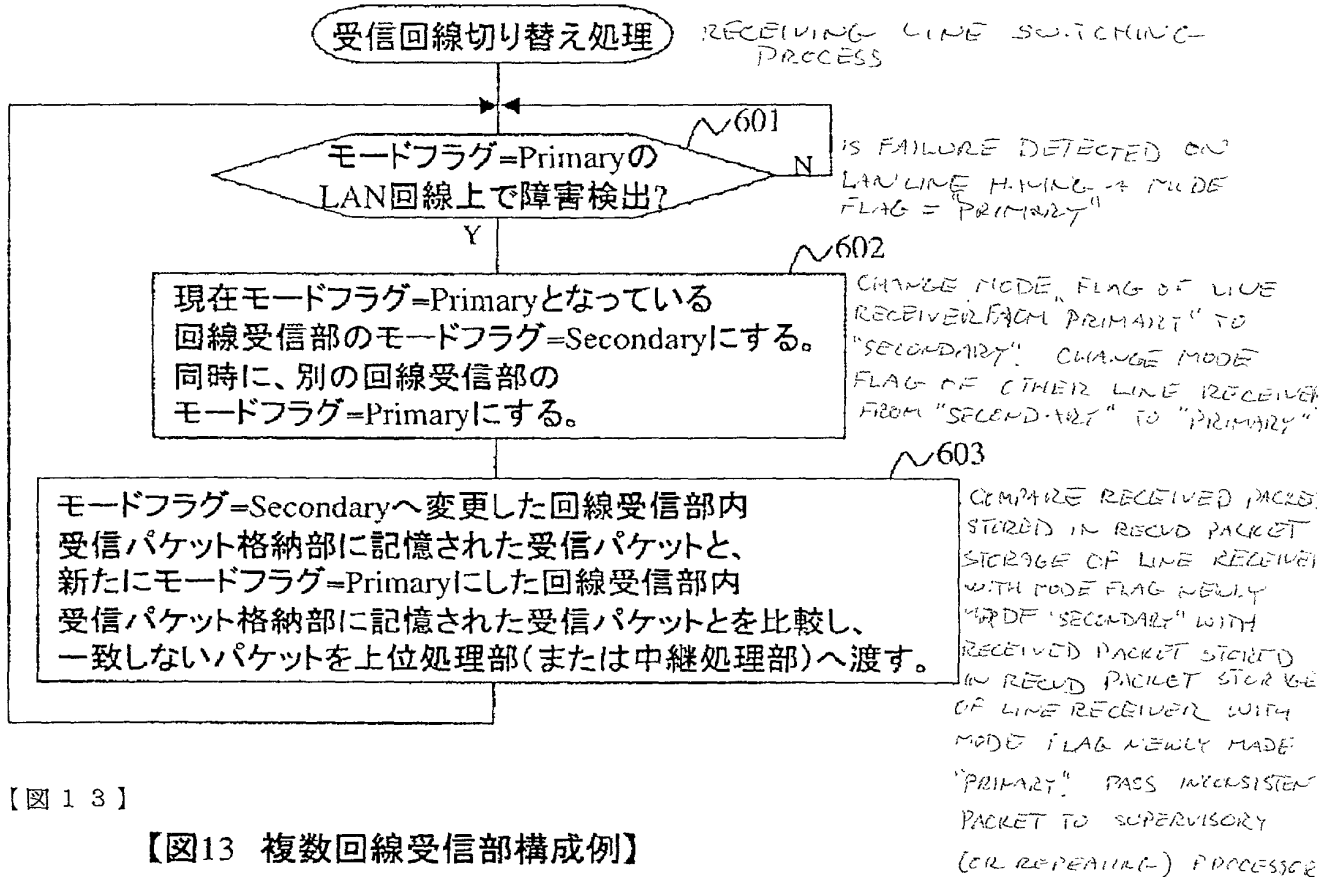
【図11 回線受信部フロー】



ファイル名 = K99051371A1.el

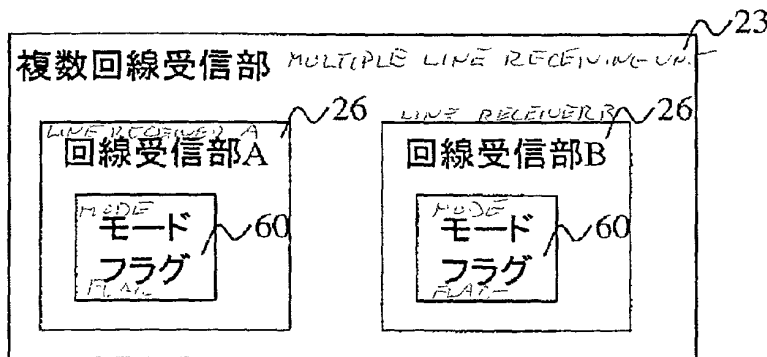
【図 1 2】

【図12 受信回線切り替え部フロー】



【図 1 3】

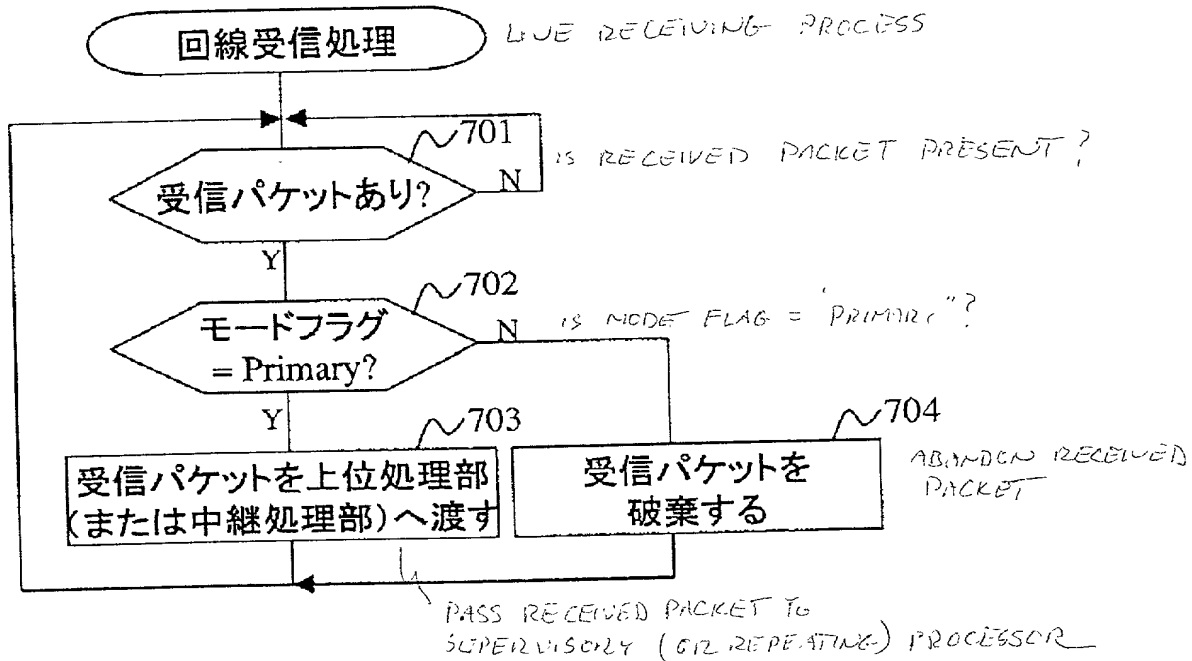
【図13 複数回線受信部構成例】



ファイル名 = K99051371A1.e1

【図14】

【図14 回線受信部フロー】



【図15】

【図15 受信回線切り替え部フロー】

